

REMARKS**Regarding the Specification:**

A new title more descriptive of the invention has been provided.

Regarding the Claims in General:

Claims 1-3, 7-10, and 12-23 are now pending. Claims 1-3, 7, 9, and 10 have been amended to better highlight the distinguishing features of the invention, and to better reflect customary idiomatic English and grammar, and U.S. claim practice.

Claims 4-6 and 11 have been canceled.

Claims 12-22 are withdrawn as directed to a non-elected invention, but claims 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, and 21 have amended to better reflect customary idiomatic English and to correct minor errors noted during preparation of this communication.

New claim 23 has been added to provide applicants with additional protection to which they appear to be entitled in light of the known prior art.

Regarding the Prior Art Rejections:

In the outstanding Office Action, claims 1-3, 9, and 10 were rejected as anticipated by Kobayashi et al. U.S. Patent 5,770,128, claim 10 was rejected as anticipated by Bandoh U.S. Patent 5,750,059, claims 1 and 2 were rejected as unpatentable over Kobayashi, claims 7-8 were rejected as unpatentable over Mimata et al. U.S. Patent 5,015,425 (Mimata) in view of Bandoh, and claims 10-11 were rejected as unpatentable over Bandoh. Applicants respectfully submit that none of these rejections is applicable to the claims in their present form. (The pending rejections of claims 4-6 are moot in view of the cancellation of these claims.)

Claim 1, as amended, recites the step of:

removing dust of the plastics material from the pellet holder *and from the pellet dispenser.*

Claims 2 and 3 have been similarly amended. Kobayashi does not teach or suggest removing plastics material dust from the pellet dispenser, but only cleaning the pellet holder. Claims 1-3 are

accordingly not anticipated by Kobayashi, nor are claims 1 and 2 rendered obvious by Kobayashi. Kobayashi admittedly discloses brushes 93 for cleaning the mold surface. If it really would have been obvious also to clean other parts using a brush, it certainly would have been suggested in the patent.

Claim 9, as amended, recites the steps of:

... displacing a door from a first position in which the door closes a molding region to a second position in which the door does not close the molding region, thereby opening a path to the molding region;

conveying one or more leadframe items along the path to a mold located in the molding region while the door is at the second position;

returning the door to the first position ...

Claim 9 has been amended to make it clear that leadframe items are conveyed along the path when the door is at the second (open) position. It should be appreciated that in Kobayashi, the shutter 84 is for a totally different purpose of opening and closing one end of the lower die base 82 in order to fit a molding section 80 (see col. 5, line 59 to col. 6, line 6). This is for inserting a module of the molding machine, and not part of an auto-molding process at all. Thus, it is the molding section 80 and not leadframe items that are conveyed when the shutter is opened. For this reason, claim 9 is not anticipated by Kobayashi.

Claim 10 now incorporates the features of previous claim 11, which has been canceled. As amended, claim 10 therefore recites:

applying a brush to at least one surface of the mold to remove dust of the plastics material from the mold, and thereafter,

removing dust from the brush by applying a vacuum source to the brush at an end position traveled by the brush.

As the Examiner recognizes, Kobayashi does teach cleaning a surface of the mold with a brush, and cleaning the tablet supply holder with a vacuum source. Likewise, Bando teaches using a blower and vacuum to clean the upper and lower mold surfaces, and suggests also cleaning the mold surfaces with a brush, but does not describe in detail how to do this. Neither reference, however, teaches or suggests using a vacuum source to clean a brush.

Moreover, while Kobayashi shows brushes 93 and vacuum source 94 near each other, there is no suggestion that the brush be moveable relative to the vacuum source for any purpose, and Bando does not even show or describe the possible location of the optionally suggested brush, let alone, anything about cleaning the brush at an end position traveled by the brush. Claim 10 is accordingly not anticipated by Kobayashi or Bando, nor rendered obvious by Bando.

Claim 7, as amended specifies that:

the leadframe is conveyed to the mold by a conveyor while exposed to a pressure source which is in communication with a cover of the conveyor whereby dust of the plastics material is removed from the leadframe.

In Mimata, the pressure source supplies air across the whole of the molding compartment. However, according to claim 7, the pressure source is in communication with a cover of the conveyor or onloader, and therefore concentrates pressure on a leadframe that is being conveyed to enhance cleaning. There is no suggestion of a cover in Mimata and Bando only teaches removing dust from the mold surfaces by blowing air over them. Since Bando does not remedy the fundamental deficiency in Mimata, claim 7 and dependent claim 8 are not rendered obvious by the combined teachings of the references.

New claim 23 is dependent on allowable claim 1, and should be allowed for the reasons stated above in connection with claim 1. In addition, however, claim 23 recites the steps of:

brushing the pellet holder and/or the pellet dispenser with a brush;
and

applying a vacuum source proximate to the brush to remove plastics dust therefrom.

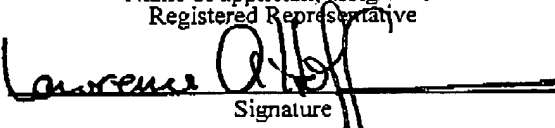
As explained above in connection with claim 10, neither Kobayashi, nor Bando, nor any other prior art of record, suggests applying a vacuum source proximate to the brush to remove plastics dust therefrom. Claim 23 should be allowed for this reason as well.

Regarding Other References Cited by the Examiner

The other references cited by the Examiner but not applied have been considered, but the present claims are not anticipated or rendered obvious by these references.

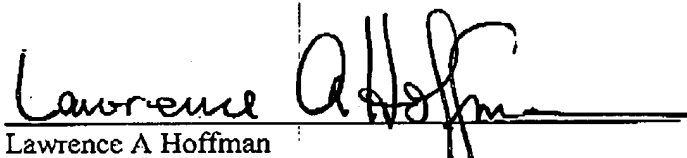
In view of the foregoing, favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application are respectfully solicited.

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being transmitted via facsimile to (703) 872-9306, addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on the date indicated below.

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LAH:cfm

Respectfully submitted,


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